

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
October 30, 2007

Budget Committee Members Present

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman  
Michael Plouffe, Vice-Chairman  
Rick Griffin, Selectman Representative  
Russ Bernstein  
Maury Friedman  
Dick Hansen  
Jack Lessard  
Richard Nichols  
Michael Pierce  
Norman Silberdick

Excused

Victor DeMarco  
Eileen Latimer

Unexcused

Pat Collins

Chairman Woolsey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Chairman Woolsey introduced the members of the Committee.

**Approval of Minutes – October 16, 2007**

**Moved** by Mr. Lessard, seconded by Mr. Pierce, to approve the Minutes of October 16, 2007 as amended.

**Vote:** 10 yes, 0 no. Motion passed.

Correction to Minutes follows:

Paragraph 5, page 5, should read:

Mr. Plouffe discussed the Social Service Agencies. He said they had been Warrant Articles and that worked for a number of years. Then they were put into the Operating budget. When the default came along, they were taken out. These should be warrant articles, and if passed, they are assured to receive their money.

Chairman Woolsey welcomed Town Manager Fred Welch and Mike Schwotzer, Finance Director.

Mr. Welch thanked the Committee for their invitation. He said the operating budget for 2008 as approved by the Board of Selectmen totals \$24,606,166 or 1.24% above the current 2007 operating budget.

Chairman Woolsey read a letter she had written to the LGC asking whether it would be permissible, under RSA 91-A, for Budget Committee members who are out of town to participate in a meeting and vote by teleconference. She read a reply from David R. Connell, Legal Services Counsel, in which he said that board members may participate by teleconference, but it is by no means certain that they can be counted in the quorum or vote without being physically present. He said the conservative approach is not to count them as present for quorum or voting purposes.

Chairman Woolsey welcomed Hampton Fire Chief Hank Lipe, Deputy Steve Benotti and Deputy Chris Silver.

Chief Lipe said they were presenting a budget that has gone through the Town Manager and the Board of Selectman. It is an operating budget that is ½% less than last year. It is very lean and includes only essential services and must have items. Chief Lipe said this budget is very fair and equitable.

Chairman Woolsey asked Deputy Benotti to repeat the evaluation he made of the neglect of this department and the fact that the overtime is a symptom of a major problem.

Deputy Benotti said that a number of years ago there were two fire stations with equal numbers of personnel. After a time the ladder truck became old and could not be replaced. Then manpower was lost and it was necessary to go to one ambulance. This resulted in overtime. Deputy Benotti said that if manpower and equipment were adequate, the overtime problem would be solved.

Chairman Woolsey asked Deputy Silver about the duties of the Deputy Chiefs. Deputy Silver said the two deputies work a regular work week, but are also first responders, day and evening.

Chairman Woolsey asked Deputy Benotti to break down the department personnel.

Deputy Benotti said there were three administrators (Lipe, Benotti, Silver). There are two fire inspectors and a part time secretary. There are four fire alarm operators. At the beach station there is a captain and two firefighters for each shift. Uptown there is a lieutenant and four firefighters for each shift.

Chairman Woolsey asked about revenues in the revolving fund. Deputy Silver said that revenue for 2006 was \$443,354 and revenue for 2007 YTD through September was \$300,066.

The following budget items were discussed:

#### Administration

Deputy Benotti discussed regular wages, holiday pay, staff development, leased equipment and uniform allowances.

Fire Suppression

Mr. Nichols asked why the amount is up for regular wages. Chief Lipe replied that it is because of step increases and the fact that incentive pay has been moved to this area.

Mr. Pierce asked why overtime would lessen for next year if it is running so high this year.

Chief Lipe explained that this year 39% of overtime has been due to workers comp.

Mr. Lessard asked why these firefighters have been out for so long. Chief Lipe explained that there have been seven firefighters out. Injuries include a back strain, two shoulder strains, a blood clot, fractured wrist, detached ligament on a finger and dislocation of a kneecap.

Chief Lipe said that all injuries are closely monitored. He said this has been a very, very bad year for injuries.

Mr. Silberdick asked if an analysis had been done showing what the savings in overtime would be if the four firefighters were added back in. Chief Lipe said for one thing the money will shift. The overtime pool will drop because it will include newer, lower-paid employees. Ambulance call back can be reduced by 50%.

Mr. Nichols said he felt the way the Police Department uses part-timers in the summer makes a lot of sense. The months of July and August increase work for both Police and Fire. The Fire Department has flat manning. Mr. Nichols said he realized this can't be changed for this year's budget, but he felt this concept should be investigated.

Deputy Benotti said that the Police deal with people. Building fires occur all during the year. Volunteer recruitment retention is not easy and training is a problem.

Mr. Nichols said he would urge the department to negotiate the clause banning part-time firefighters out of the contract so it could at least be looked at.

Chairman Woolsey said liability is another issue. It is getting harder for the Police Department now.

Chief Lipe said that the Board of Selectmen voted to sponsor a warrant article to go after federal funding for the addition of four firefighters.

Chairman Woolsey said that the Committee understands that they do not set policy and have no control over the manner in which money is spent. She said being tied to the federal government for five years is a concern. In addition, this is a matter that cannot wait. She said she is not willing to add money to this budget without a commitment from the Board of Selectmen that they would honor the Budget Committee's reason for putting in such a sum. She said the estimated cost for adding the four firefighters in April, 2008 would be approximately \$225,000. Since there will be a saving of \$232,000 for health insurance, this seems to be the opportunity to re-establish the four positions that were discontinued by the Board of Selectmen in 2005. Chairman Woolsey said that at this time she could not say to the voters that their safety, life and property can be guaranteed with the present staffing.

### Fire Prevention

Mr. Pierce noted that training has been reduced \$20,000 from last year and asked if that will be detrimental. Deputy Silver said this area has been severely impacted since 2005. Chief Lipe said that all mandated training is taken care of.

Billing to and payment from private details was discussed. Chairman Woolsey said all private details should be billed and paid.

**Moved** by Mr. Plouffe, seconded by Mr. Lessard, to table this budget to see if management would like to rework this budget.

Chairman Woolsey said the Committee would be asking the Manager and the Chief to re-work this budget to see if overtime costs can be reduced by adding four firefighters in April 2008. She said she would like an understanding on the part of the Board of Selectmen that if the Budget Committee makes a commitment to this, it will be respected. The Committee will work with the Selectmen. This is the problem section of the 2008 budget. Once the re-work is done, a time will be added to the schedule to address this issue.

Mr. Plouffe said he would like to revise the motion.

**Moved** by Mr. Plouffe, seconded by Mr. Pierce, to table this Fire Department proposal until the Committee receives more information on the cost benefit of adding four firefighters for three quarters of the year to the 2008 budget.

**Vote:** 7 yes, 3 no (Griffin, Hansen, Nichols). Motion passed.

Mr. Nichols said he felt the proposal for the new fire station is way too expensive. Chairman Woolsey said that the Building Inspector and Planning would be housed under this proposal.

**Moved** by Mr. Nichols, seconded by Mr. Pierce, to formally request of the Board of Selectmen clarification on the terms of the original agreement between the Precinct and the Town regarding the transfer of the leased property which was to be conveyed to the Town.

**Vote:** 10 yes, 0 no. Motion passed.

The next meeting will be Thursday, November 1, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. At this time the Police Department budget will be addressed.

### Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Lessard **moved**, seconded by Mr. Pierce, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

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The meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice  
Secretary

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Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman